

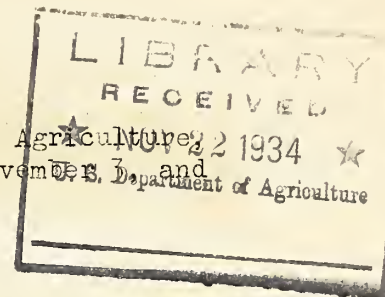
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WHAT OF THE TOMORROW FOR 4-H CLUB MEMBERS

A radio talk by M. L. Wilson, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H Achievement Radio Program, November 22, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.



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Twenty-three years ago, in Montana, I first helped organize 4-H Clubs. I believed then that the 4-H movement was one of the finest affecting life on the farm. I have had no reason to change my mind. After 23 years of close observation of this movement, it is interesting to look back, to think of what has been going on in the world of agriculture, and to examine some of the effects of the 4-H movement. The boys and girls who joined the clubs I first helped to organize, are now men and women.

Frequently, I meet them, and I find that out of their experience they have gained something of real value which has stayed with them. Many of them have become leaders in their communities. As parents, they have encouraged their own children to take part in club work. When they are asked to estimate what their experiences as club members did for them in adult life, they usually have a prompt answer.

Some of them emphasize that they learned more about how to do things well. Others say that their experience stirred up their interest in certain special lines of agricultural activity. Still others learned how to be more neighborly, how to get more out of the attractions of farm life. But there is one thing they all believe they obtained from this experience -- that is a greater ability to cooperate with others and to know the values and satisfactions that go with cooperation.

This is not only their feeling. From the ranks of 4-H club members of the past, have come many of our cooperative leaders. The great work of cooperation which has moved so far in the past 18 months, involving the Department of Agriculture, its extension service, the Agriculture Adjustment Administration, and the Farm Credit Administration, has brought forward many persons who were better equipped to help in this movement because of their 4-H club experience. We are learning that cooperation will help the farmer win more of the good things of life and the 4-H movement has been a more important factor in making cooperation possible than many of us might suspect.

Let us look at the future. The farm boy and girl of today has a greater need of learning the advantages of cooperation and how to cooperate than ever before. Agriculture is becoming more and more a matter of teamwork. Like their parents, the farm boys and girls of this day are seeing that agriculture is not only what goes on within the borders of a farm. The boy in Iowa is learning that he has much in common with the boy in Georgia. The girl in Texas and the girls of Maine, Ohio and Oregon have problems which are alike. Our main crop may be cotton, corn, wheat, truck crops, cattle, sheep hogs or apples--but above all, we are farmers with a community of interest exactly as though we were neighbors living in the same school district.

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We have been learning in agriculture how to become good husbandmen. We have to continue to learn the secrets of feeding livestock, raising crops and caring for our orchards and gardens. We want to know more and more about home preservation of food, of how to get more enjoyment out of life, and how to be better friends with one another.

But we also want to know more about the thing in which we all have a stake -- the problems of farmers as a whole. We need to know more how much we can sell at a fair price, how much we can produce without piling up surpluses, how to make better use of our lands, and how to make sure that our farms are going to be as good 25 years from now as they are now. We want to learn more about conservation of our land resources. We want to make sure that we are making the best use of our lands. We want to substitute scientific knowledge for guesswork in the use of our lands and in dealing with the problems of all agriculture. We need more science and we need more economics.

But we need to keep our minds open because this is a world of change, and sometimes things change faster than we realize. For instance, do we all know why we sold up to one-fourth of the products of American farms to other countries each year before the World War, while now we can sell only a very small part of what we can produce?

The real achievements of the effort of boys and girls who today are members of the 4-H Clubs, will not be measured alone in your project work. They also will be measured in whether you develop inquiring minds concerning the problems which face all farmers. How can we make the effects of a drought like we have had this year less severe in the future? What can farmers do to help prevent depressions? We can learn how to get the facts and to use the facts.

Life on farms can become better every year. One of the tasks of 4-H Club members is to find out how and then to help make them better.

There is one thing which I regret, and about which you, who are a member of 4-H clubs, can do something. There are more than eleven million boys and girls on farms today. About one-twentieth of you belong to 4-H clubs. I believe that more should become members. Can you and your leaders do something about that? Encourage others to join with you.